

**STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SOUKUP, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, ON S. 777, A BILL TO DESIGNATE CATOCTIN MOUNTAIN PARK IN THE STATE OF MARYLAND AS THE “CATOCTIN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL RECREATION AREA”**

**April 28, 2005**

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 777, a bill to designate Catoctin Mountain Park in the State of Maryland as the “Catoctin Mountain National Recreation Area.”

The Department supports S. 777 with two technical corrections added at the end of the testimony. This legislation would provide a name for Catoctin Mountain Park that is appropriate for the purpose and use of this unit of the National Park System, and it also would update the authorities for administering this park.

Catoctin Mountain Park had its origins as one of 46 Great Depression-era Recreational Demonstration Areas established by the Resettlement Administration, which was authorized under the National Industrial Recovery Act (1933) and Executive Orders of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Resettlement Administration acquired and developed Recreational Demonstration Areas across the nation to provide accessible, low-cost, quality outdoor recreation opportunities. They were used for day trips, picnicking, and overnight camping by families, social groups, and public organizations.

Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area, which comprised approximately 20,000 acres, was acquired after the area had sustained years of charcoal production, mountain farming, and harvesting of trees for timber. The Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps administered projects at Catoctin both to put people back to work and to establish an outdoor recreation area for the urban dwellers of nearby Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland. Jurisdiction over the Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area was transferred to the National Park Service in 1935 by Executive Order.

In 1942, one of the cabin camps built at Catoctin, Camp Hi-Catoctin, was selected by President Roosevelt as the Presidential Retreat we know today as Camp David. Catoctin's distinctive history also includes serving as an O.S.S. training camp during World War II, and having the first Job Corps camp in the United States and the nation's oldest camp for the disabled.

In 1954, approximately 4,400 acres of the area was transferred to the State of Maryland and became Cunningham Falls State Park. That same year, the Director of the National Park Service approved the renaming of Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area as "Catoctin Mountain Park" and Congress provided authority to exchange lands to consolidate holdings in the park. Catoctin Mountain Park is currently 5,810 acres in size and has an average annual visitation of 700,000. The park, consisting largely of eastern hardwood forest, has many attractions for visitors: camping, picnicking, fishing, 25 miles of hiking trails and scenic mountain vistas.

The proximity of Catoctin Mountain Park, Camp David, and Cunningham Falls State Park has caused longstanding confusion for visitors to the area. Catoctin Mountain Park is continually

misunderstood as being closed to the public because of the presence of Camp David. Renaming the park as a “national recreation area” would offer an opportunity to reintroduce the park as an area that is open to public recreation. The public also has difficulty understanding why there is a difference between the activities permitted at Catoctin Mountain Park and those permitted at Cunningham Falls State Park. Including the word “national” in the name of Catoctin Mountain Park would facilitate efforts to educate the public about these differences and to emphasize the value the National Park Service places on protecting cultural and natural resources for future generations.

In addition, the name “national recreation area” would also help distinguish Catoctin Mountain Park from other local attractions, such as the privately-owned Catoctin Wildlife Preserve and Zoo, which are often confused with the park. And, the name change would enhance the efforts of the Maryland Office of Tourism Development and local tourism officials to promote the presence of the five National Park System units located in Frederick County, one of which is Catoctin Mountain Park.

In addition to changing the name of the Catoctin Mountain Park, S. 777 would provide the usual authorities that are included when a new unit of the National Park System is established. These provisions will make it easier for the National Park Service to administer the unit than continuing to rely on the piecemeal authorities that were granted since the 1930’s. The authorities provided by S. 777 include providing for administration of the unit in accordance with laws governing the National Park System, and authorizing appropriations for the park. It would also formally establish a boundary, which is essentially the existing ownership of the National Park Service, and

permit land acquisition that would allow for minor boundary adjustments although none is contemplated at this time. These provisions will ensure that the park is able to continue to appropriately administer the park's significant historic resources and important natural areas. The costs associated with this legislation would be negligible.

We are currently reviewing previous authorities for Catoctin Mountain Park to determine whether any of them should be repealed in conjunction with providing the new authority for the park under S. 777. We will advise the subcommittee of our findings as soon as possible.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks. I will be happy to answer any questions you or the other committee members have.

Proposed amendments to S. 777

On page 2, line 6, strike “in 1952, approximately 5,000” and insert “in 1954, approximately 4,400”.

On page 3, lines 10 and 11, strike “ ‘Catoctin Mountain National Recreation Area,’ numbered 841/80444, and dated August 14, 2002.” and insert “ ‘Catoctin Mountain National Recreation Area,’ numbered 841/80444B, and dated April 2005.”